



UTAH & WICHE

Working Together for Over a Half Century

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Western Interstate
Commission for Higher
Education

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Since 1953 Utah has been a member of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), a 15-state commission working to boost access to higher education for students in the West and, as importantly, to ensure their success.

In the five-plus decades since Utah joined the commission, the state has benefitted in a number of essential ways.

- ▶ Thousands of students from Utah have attended undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs in other Western states through WICHE's Student Exchange Program, saving millions of dollars, thanks to reduced tuition rates. In just one of the programs, the Western Undergraduate Exchange, **Utah students and their families have saved \$48.4 million** since 1988, when the program was founded. (See "Doing the Math," below, for Utah's return on investment.)
- ▶ Utah has received funding to be part of numerous WICHE policy initiatives, including those focused on financing and financial aid, workforce policy, and other areas.
- ▶ Utah has participated in WICHE initiatives related to distance education, workforce development, and behavioral health.

WICHE and Utah have shared a remarkably fruitful history. But their prospects for the future are even more exciting.

WICHE's Student Exchange

Utah is active in all three WICHE Student Exchange Programs: the Western Undergraduate Exchange, the Professional Student Exchange Program, and the Western Regional Graduate Program. In 2011-12 Utah's students and families saved over **\$6.3 million**. Utah saved money, too, through not having to establish and maintain costly programs in a number of areas, including some in healthcare.

Western Undergraduate Exchange. Utah students have enrolled in undergraduate programs beyond Utah's borders through the Western

Doing the Math: Utah's Return on Investment

In 2011-12 Utah, its institutions, and its students saved or brought in some **\$6.4 million** through WICHE and spent \$125,000 for membership in the commission, yielding a **50-fold return on investment**.

In the last 5 years, Utah students' savings from WUE alone have topped **\$24.7 million**, yielding a **40-fold return** on the state's investment in WICHE.

UTAH *and* WICHE

Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) since 1988, **saving on 10,831 annual tuition bills**. In 2011-12, 885 students from Utah are enrolled in out-of-state programs at reduced rates (150 percent of resident tuition), saving some \$5 million in tuition and fees – the average student savings amounted to \$5,539. In the last dozen years, students have saved **\$42 million**.

Utah benefits from WUE in another way: by receiving students from out of state. Utah’s institutions can choose how many out-of-state slots to offer and in which areas, allowing them to make the best use of their resources by accepting students in underenrolled programs. There’s a workforce benefit for the state, too, as students often stay in Utah after graduating. In 2011-12 Utah received 661 students through WUE.

Professional Student Exchange Program. Utah has sent **675 students** to professional programs through the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP), with students studying in a host of critical fields, including optometry, podiatry, and veterinary medicine. Historically, some 56 percent of PSEP students return to Utah to pursue their professional careers.

Western Regional Graduate Program. Utah’s postgraduates also participate in graduate programs through the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP), which offers access to over 250 high-quality, distinctive programs (“distinctive” meaning that they’re offered at only four or fewer institutions in the WICHE region) at 47 institutions in all WICHE states. WRGP programs run the gamut, but emerging social, environmental, and resource-management fields are particular strengths, as are innovative interdisciplinary programs. In 2011-12 Utah sent 58 students to out-of-state institutions, while receiving 118.

Figure 1. Utah Savings & Revenues through WICHE, 2011

Student Savings	
WUE	\$4,901,664
PSEP	\$669,308
WRGP	\$776,398
Total Student Savings	\$6,347,370
Revenue to UT Institutions (PSEP)	
TOTAL	\$59,466
TOTAL	\$6,406,836

Internet Course Exchange (ICE). WICHE’s newest exchange is ICE, an alliance of member institutions and systems with a set of policies, procedures, and support systems for sharing distance-delivered courses among two- and four-year institutions in the 15-state WICHE region.

Utah is one of five partner states participating in the **Interstate Passport Initiative**, which seeks to improve graduation rates, shorten time to degree, and save students money by addressing the two-year to four-year institution transfer problem at an interstate level. The two-year pilot project will focus on forging general education core transfer agreements based on learning outcomes between 28 institutions, including Dixie State College of Utah, Salt Lake Community College, Snow College, Southern Utah University, University of Utah, Utah State University, Utah Valley University, and Weber State University.

WICHE’s Added Value

Utah gains added value from WICHE’s programs in policy, workforce development, technology, mental health, and other areas.

Policy & Workforce Development. Utah has participated in projects supporting better-informed decision making at the state level. WICHE initiatives have been sponsored by the Ford Foundation, Lumina Foundation for Education, the U.S. Department of Education, and others. In addition, WICHE policy experts often visit the state to present or consult on a number of vital issues, including the state’s workforce needs and balancing the financial aid portfolio between grants, loans, and scholarships, as well as between merit- and need-based aid. Utah decision makers also keep current on pressing policy issues developing all over the nation through WICHE’s extensive network.

Utah participates in WICHE’s **College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) Consortium and Network**, a federally funded formula grant program designed to increase the number of low-income students who enroll and succeed in college. The network provides a forum for developing, implementing, and maintaining state CACG efforts, with states sharing best practices and lessons learned and receiving current evidence-based research.

WORKING TOGETHER *for* OVER a HALF CENTURY

"I graduated with my D.V.M. from Colorado State University in 1996. I returned to Utah after my residency and have been in private veterinary practice for more than 13 years; I now employ a staff of eight. The WICHE program made my lifelong professional goal possible. It gives students access to a top-quality education from well-established programs at a lower cost than what a state would have to spend to operate its own program. WICHE makes cost-prohibitive dreams come true!"

—John W. Farrer, D.V.M., Utah resident, Class of 1996,
Colorado State University, College of Veterinary Medicine

WICHE-related services to the consortium states include grant development and management, program implementation and evaluation, and ongoing expert consultation and guidance.

Utah worked with the **Western Consortium for Accelerated Learning Opportunities**, to increase the number of low-income students enrolling and succeeding in **Advanced Placement** courses and tests, with funding from the federal Advanced Placement Incentive Program.

WICHE's Lumina-funded project *Getting What You Pay For: Understanding Higher Education Appropriations, Tuition, and Financial Aid* promoted informed decision making and the alignment of higher education **appropriations, tuition, and financial aid** policy by state legislators, to improve student access and success. WICHE sent copies of the project's eight policy briefs to all members of the Utah Legislature.

Utah also participated in another Lumina project, *Best Practices in Statewide Articulation and Transfer Systems*, which seeks to develop a deeper understanding of how states coordinate their **articulation and transfer** programs for students who move from two-year to four-year institutions, focusing on strategies that increase access to and success in higher education.

Additionally, the Utah State Board of Regents and Utah Valley University are members of the **Western Academic Leadership Forum**, whose members address regional higher education issues and engage in resource sharing. A new WICHE initiative, the **Western Alliance for Community College Academic Leaders**, will bring academic leaders of community colleges and technical schools and systems together with state governing and coordinating boards associated with two-year institutions to exchange ideas and information, share resources and expertise, and collaborate on regional

initiatives. Salt Lake Community College and Snow College are members.

Technology. Several Utah colleges and universities are active participants in the **WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET)**, a membership cooperative that accelerates the adoption of effective practices and policies to advance excellence in technology-enhanced teaching and learning in higher education. Western Governors University is a participant in the *Transparency by Design* project, a consumer education and accountability strategy benefiting adult students and the online higher education community.

WCET members have access to trusted information on emerging trends, policies, and exemplars of successful learning technology innovation in practice. WCET provides access to peers, colleagues, common interest groups, experts, and decision makers; communications tools that enable members to stay informed about developments affecting technology-enabled teaching and learning; and information about key developments affecting e-learning providers, such as new federal rules pertaining to distance education. WCET also manages multi-institutional projects, one aimed at adult online learners and another on large-scale student data aggregation and predictive analytics to improve student outcomes.

Mental Health. A nucleus for researching mental health policy and a provider of technical assistance in such areas as service innovation, system reform, workforce development, program evaluation, and other areas, WICHE's **Mental Health Program** is another well-used resource. Southern Utah University participated in a research study, funded by the National Institute for Mental Health, that focuses on campus mental health and the effects of mental health first aid training for campus residence life staff.

Other Initiatives. Utah was chosen to participate in the WICHE-managed **State Scholars Initiative (SSI)**, a national business/education partnership effort working to increase the number of students who take a rigorous curriculum in high school; its program was funded by a grant of \$300,000 from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education. In 2008 Utah sent a team to the National Summit on Rigor and Relevance in Boston, sponsored by SSI.

Utah's Westminster College participates in another initiative, the **Master Property Program (MPP)**, which helps institutions reduce their insurance premiums and improve their coverage. Created by the Midwestern Higher Education Compact in 1994 and expanded to the WICHE region in 2004, the MPP includes 50 member institutions with total insured values of \$78.9 billion. It has generated some \$65.4 million in savings for the participating institutions while expanding their insurance coverage.

Utah & WICHE's Leadership

Bonnie J. Beesley, chair of the Utah Board of Regents, Salt Lake City, is the chair of the **WICHE Commission**, whose members mold the organization's mission and set its priorities Utah's other commissioners are: Senator Peter C. Knudson, Brigham City; and William Sederburg, commissioner, Utah System of Higher Education, Salt Lake City.

WICHE also seeks assistance and advice from policymakers, educators, administrators and legislators. WICHE's **Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC)**, composed of legislator-members from each state – including Senator Knudson; Representative Mel Brown, Coalville; and Senator John Valentine, Utah County – has been crucial in this regard. The LAC works to keep the commission's Executive Committee and staff current on significant legislative issues related to higher education, provides input on WICHE initiatives, and



Bonnie Beesley



Peter Knudson



William Sederburg

advises staff on a host of issues. WICHE staff also serves the LAC, by informing its members about emerging policy issues in the West.

WICHE Commission & Staff

The **WICHE Commission** includes 45 members from 15 Western states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

WICHE and its staff are headquartered in Boulder, CO, and operate out of the State Higher Education Policy Center, which WICHE owns with the State Higher Education Executive Officers association and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.

Staff leadership includes:

David Longanecker, president

Margo Colalancia, director, Student Exchange Program

Demarée Michelau, director of policy analysis

Jere Mock, vice president, Programs and Services

Dennis Mohatt, director, Mental Health Program, and vice president, behavioral health

Brian Prescott, director of policy research

Pat Shea, director, Western Alliance of Community College Academic Leaders, WICHE ICE, and Western Academic Leadership Forum

Ellen Wagner, executive director, WCET

How can I find out more about WICHE?

Visit our website at www.wiche.edu or contact President David Longanecker at 303.541.0201.

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WICHE

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

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